

Liberate Palestine!

A League for the
Fifth International
pamphlet

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A programme to liberate Palestine

The Palestinian national liberation struggle started with resistance to the British colonialists and the Zionist settlers they sponsored after 1917. But the Nakba (catastrophe), the ethnic cleansing of over 900,000 refugees during and immediately after the creation of Israel in 1948 gave a vast historic dimension to this struggle. The seizure of the West Bank and Gaza after the Six Day War in 1967 led to the opening of an unbroken campaign of resistance. It also added enormously to the number of Palestinians living as permanent refugees (now over five million). The Zionists have unceasingly "made facts on the ground" by settling the best land of Palestine that was open to them after their conquests.

This expansion goes on today on the West Bank and Jerusalem with the Apartheid wall and the illegal settlements. The scarcely concealed aim of all the main Zionist parties is to make the Zionist land grab of 1948, alongside large parts of the land taken in 1967, permanent and irreversible. They want to make an independent, sovereign and economically viable Palestinian state, even within the pre-1967 borders, impossible. The only difference amongst the Zionists is between those who wish to create a Bantustan, a disarmed non-contiguous buffer state, to protect Israel from the Arab world and those who fully intend to continue expelling the Palestinians from their homeland until the process is complete.

Our goal must therefore be the destruction of the racist Zionist settler state and its replacement by a single secular state for all the people of Palestine Arabs and Israelis, Muslims Jews and Christians.

The Zionists latest drive is to starve and bomb the Gaza into submission and pressure the Palestinian National Authority into signing a surrender that will include disarmament of all resistance fighters, acceptance of nearly all the post-1967 and post 2000 land grabs, acceptance of a fragmented, disarmed, and IDF policed "state" or "entity". They hope to achieve the permanent and "legal" exclusion of the half of the Palestinian people forced out of historic Palestine since 1947 – to prevent the right to return without which the Zionists settlers would always have been a minority there.

We fight for the right to return of all Palestinian refugees, and for direct compensation to be paid to those who choose not to return home.

Despite the hypocritical phrases of the Annapolis declaration the Israelis are carrying on with their land grab in the West Bank by building their "security barrier", which has been called "the Apartheid wall" internationally and which contravenes international law, though of course no state power can or will punish them for this.

- Demolish the apartheid wall, for freedom of movement for all Palestinians throughout the Gaza strip, the West Bank and into Israel
- No recognition of the Zionist settler state's "right to exist" and oppress and exclude Palestinians from historic Palestine
- Abolish the IDF and all Israeli security forces and services
- End the genocidal siege of Gaza and the collective punishment for its people

We call for the dismantling of the settlements, illegal under international law, and used by the Israelis to prevent the creation of any meaningful Palestinian state.

Today many Palestinian militants are locked up indefinitely in Israeli jails, along side many more non-combatants who were arrested arbitrarily and detained. We demand the release of all the thousands of Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli jails.

This monstrous process of ethnic cleansing has only been possible through the support for the Zionist settlement process over 90 years first by British colonialism and then United States imperialism. Their motives were first to colonise then later weaken and divide the independent Arab states, making it possible to exploit the enormous oil wealth of the region. This wealth has flowed west and east to fuel the industrial and commercial development of Europe, America, and Japan whilst the masses of the Arab countries and Iran have lived in poverty for generations.

- We fight for the nationalisation without compensation of all the holdings of the imperialist multinationals, of the oil companies and their assets throughout the region.
- We demand that the imperialist states and the oil companies pay massive compensation for their super-exploitation of the region over the last century.

Israel is a wedge driven into the fractured Arab world. Billions of US dollars have built a militarily powerful agency capable of acting as their policeman.

The liberation of the entire region from imperialist exploitation and from the dictatorial regimes which act as puppets of the west requires the driving out of all US bases, all NATO troops, the closing of all their bases and naval installations.

The Palestinian struggle and the struggle

for democracy and freedom from exploitation in all the countries of the region are inseparable from one another. Israeli attack on Gaza and the West Bank can be countered and halted by huge movements on the streets of Cairo, Amman, Beirut, Damascus and further afield. Sympathy for Palestine strengthens the struggle against the Mubaraks and King Abdullah's. Freedom for the popular masses of all these states, freedom for Iraqis against the American occupiers are inextricable for freedom for Palestine. The task however is to turn this spontaneous feeling and the wishes of millions into an organised common struggle.

Yet the creation of the state of Israel would have been impossibility without the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust creating large numbers of Jewish refugees that the European and North American states were unwilling to take. Before the Holocaust the vast majority of Jews in Europe were not Zionists, the idea spread primarily because of the success and violence of European anti-Semitism. Even though the Israeli state has used the Holocaust as justification for its existence, as a way of mobilising support from guilty American and European governments, it would be self-defeating for the oppressed Palestinians to adopt anti-Semitic slogans or deny the Holocaust.

Palestinians today have far more in common with the Jews of the 1940s than today's Israeli settlers. Indeed these settlers have more in common with the Nazis of the 1940s, as was been shown when the deputy defence minister threatening the people of Gaza with a holocaust. Despite the reactionary colonisation policy most of the Jewish population are workers and farmers with no ulterior motive beyond seeking to work and bring up their families. To these workers and farmers the majority of the Palestinian movement has repeatedly, and despite the terrible sufferings at the hands of

Israel held out the hand of friendship and has not threatened to "drive them into the sea."

Only the hardened Zionist settlers, driving Palestinians from their land today are likely to prove inveterate enemies. But if two peoples claim the same land as their own private property reconciliation will be a political and logical impossibility. The return of millions of Palestinian refugees would create terrible conditions if it were left to the capitalists and the market to provide the answer to the problems. However there is a way that the historic land of Palestine can support and see the reconciliation of the Arabs and Jews, this is through the socialisation of the means of production, exchange and distribution. On this basis a democratic plan can be implemented to ensure housing, amenities and work for everyone. The goal of the liberation of the Palestinians can only come about through a strategy of permanent revolution, turning the democratic struggle into a fight for socialist planning and control.

Therefore we fight for a socialist solution based on common ownership of the land to and all the large scale means of production. This does not mean the expropriation of those actually working the land but on the contrary will enable them to improve and develop it providing a good life for themselves and food and other agricultural products for the villages, towns and cities contributing to a democratically agreed plan. In the factories and other workplaces we fight for workers control and management. Collective ownership can also be the road to resolving the conflict between Israeli workers, working farmers and homeowners and the returning Palestinians. Democratically planned social ownership can create jobs and housing for everyone. We put forward the following economic demands as a way of creating a united and socially just state for both Jews and Arabs.

- Land to the tillers! We demand the

nationalisation of the land so that those who originally tilled it, and wish to do so again, can return and those Israelis who have worked the land for many years and wish to continue to do so can continue to do so alongside their Palestinian brothers and sisters in democratic cooperatives, providing food for the entire population

- Complete nationalisation of all banks and financial institutions under the control of their workers
- Nationalisation under workers control of all large-scale industry and the establishment of cross-sectoral committees to begin a plan of production and distribution
- For a massive programme of public works to build housing, schools and hospitals. Create integrated work groups which allocate housing according to need
- For regional plan of energy production that shifts away from fossil fuel burning electricity production towards renewable energies

How can we fight to overcome the division between Jewish and Arab workers? We must build fighting unity with any Jewish-Israeli organisation that fights in practice for Palestinian democratic rights, organise joint demonstrations, rallies and pickets. Support for the struggles of Palestinian citizens of Israel and any other ethnic minorities within the Zionist state (e.g., Chinese and east European migrant labourers). Support for the social and economic struggles of the Jewish workers and youth wherever these are not directed against Palestinians. Palestinian-Israelis should form joint organs of struggle where possible with Israeli Jewish workers against the government and the Israeli capitalists.

Palestinian Israelis have an important role to play in the liberation of their brothers and

sisters, they have more economic power and more political freedoms. A revolutionary organisation would use this to the advantage of the Palestinian people, it must be an organisation that can carry out its work, illegally if necessary, in Israel itself.

To this end state clearly that the Palestinians as an oppressed people have no interest in reversing this oppression as the Zionists have done, by oppressing Jews or Israelis. We contemptuously reject anti-Semitism and welcome all those who support the right of anyone to stay in Palestine and build up a country with no national, racial, religious or linguistic privileges for anyone.

What kind of politics is needed?

Revolutionary communists propose a new programme or action to free the Palestinians, one based on the methods of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. Therefore a crucial first step is the creation of organisations-parties - which can fight for this programme, producing publications and organising meetings, demonstrations. We do not expect the masses to spontaneously adopt the revolutionary tactics and strategy that can flow only from a detailed scientific analysis of society as a whole. As Leninists, we understand the importance of the active intervention of communists in fighting for a correct programme.

We reject the Stalinist strategy of the people's front because it subordinates the working class to the leadership of the "national" capitalists and postpones the seizure of power by the workers and peasants for an entire historic period of supposedly national capitalism and bourgeois democracy. Neither is possible to achieve except in the economically stunted and dictatorial forms familiar to workers in Jordan, Egypt etc. This does not in any way mean the working class should refuse to struggle against Zionism and imperialism with all sectors of

Palestinian society - but especially the farmers, the unemployed, the small traders, but that it must strive to take the lead this struggle. It can do so by showing that it is the best organised, the most effective and the least likely to compromise or surrender to the enemy.

Thus we are advocates of an anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist united front against each and every attack of these plunderers, including in its ranks socialists, Islamic and secular nationalists. All we ask from our partners in struggle is mutual respect for each other's democratic rights and freedom of expression for our differing views. Naturally we will never give political support to our united front partners on their different end goals for society (an Islamic or a secular capitalist republic).

It is only a political programme that unites the proletariat, as workers, mobilising them to achieve their own class goals, and leading the other oppressed classes behind this leadership that can bring the revolution to ultimate victory. The mass demonstration, the strike, the picket, popular committees of struggle, the trade union and workplace committee, the general strike, which in a profound revolutionary situation culminates in the armed popular insurrection - these constitute the main elements of a communist strategy. Pacifism may appear an attractive option when confronted with the might of the Zionist army, but it ultimately plays into the hands of the imperialists and Israel in preventing the possibility of a genuine socialist revolution against Israel. the gains made by pacifist struggles can be taken back again very easily, and the history of Israel shows that they are willing to carry out atrocious war crimes to defeat resistance to their struggle.

Israel is not all-powerful, as it would like to believe. Its defeat by Hezbollah in the summer of 2006 proved that it could be

beaten, even by a much lighter armed guerrilla movement. Even this limited victory, the thwarting of the IDF's plans to cleanse the whole of southern Lebanon of resistance fighters, has thrown the Israeli ruling class into internal conflict. The punishment of the people of Gaza is in no small measure a "revenge" for the Israeli defeats in Lebanon.

Israel has shown through its actions that there can be no viable two state solution, since no viable Palestinian state will ever be allowed to exist alongside Israel. The Israeli state has always and will always aim at the political and social genocide of the Palestinian people. All concessions to it by Palestinian leaders have simply been the precursor to further advance of the borders and settlements.

Fatah previously under Yasser Arafat and now under Mahmoud Abbas has become a loyal ally of the Zionist state and the imperialist powers, carrying out the bidding of their masters in Tel Aviv and Washington. Many people turned against them because of their corruption and greed. We demand a full and independent investigation into corruption in the Palestinian National Authority. Open the account books to see where all the money has gone and seize misappropriated funds. We also call for the demobilisation of the private Palestinian security forces, and elite imperialist trained units like 'Force 17' and for their replacement with a popular militia, the armed people.

Internal and external alliances

A revolutionary struggle against the Zionist state must follow several parallel lines of development. First of all, it must seek to unite its own struggle with the national, democratic and social struggles of the broadest sections of Arab masses, under the leadership of the working class movements of the region as a whole.

Our goal in every country is to bring the

working class to the head of the struggles for national liberation against the kings, dictators and clerics, against Zionism and their North American and European masters. Only by waging these struggles to the end, showing that the working class alone has the strength and the uncompromising determination to drive out the imperialists and overthrow all their national and regional agents can victory be achieved. But the goal of this struggle can only be the political power of the working class and its allies, the poor of the town and countryside. Once power is in their hands the common needs of employment, housing and the development of agriculture will demand socialist measures, such as nationalisation, workers management and planning.

The struggle for Palestinian liberation can thereby benefit from, and act as a spur to, the struggles of the Arab peoples against their own rulers. A policy of permanent revolution can turn the struggles for democracy and genuine national independence in those countries into a working class struggle for state power. The struggle for democracy must at all times become a struggle for real democratic power, for the working class and poor, the majority of the population of the middle east, to take power into their own hands.

Similarly, the liberation struggle should appeal to and take advantage of the solidarity of the workers organisations and anti-capitalists globally. In the imperialist countries as well as in semi-colonies, there exists a strong popular sympathy with the Palestinians for the historic and continuing injustices they have suffered.

This sympathy should be translated into active and practical organised support. Revolutionaries in the imperialist countries have a special responsibility in this regard, to expose the complicity of their governments with Israel's crimes, and to force the bureaucracies of the mass workers organisa-

tions – the trade unions and workers' parties with their millions of members and supporters – to move from words to deeds.

Small-scale practical actions can be used to place pressure on the official workers' organisations in the West and elsewhere, to promote trade and academic boycotts of Israel, to block arms sales, military aid and loan guarantees, and to isolate Israel in the way that the South African apartheid regime was isolated. The Israeli state is an artificial construction, it only survives because of massive US funding. Anti Zionists must use every opportunity to cut the economic and military aid to Israel from the imperialists.

Internationally we must build a movement that forces the imperialist countries to lift all the economic sanctions that they have imposed on the Palestinians. At the same time we must fight worldwide for workers' sanctions and an academic boycott of Israel, the apartheid state. Any international campaign must target the US and EU governments, which have economic and military ties to Israel, forcing them to break the link and stop funding the racist, settler state of Israel.

Finally, the liberation struggle should encourage all and any developments within Israeli society that might fracture the bloc between the Jewish-Israeli proletariat and the Zionist bourgeoisie. Given the strong material basis and historic durability of this reactionary alliance, it would be a mistake to make the liberation struggle strategically dependent on this occurring first. However, it remains our intention to divide Jewish-Israeli society along class lines, and to turn the Israeli workers and youth against the Zionist leaders, we therefore use every tactic and strategy to bring this about.

Whilst Jewish workers remain tied to the Histadrut a state run union this will provide no real leadership in their struggles for higher wages and against job cuts. The

Israeli state has also spent years privatising nearly all of its assets, and now increases university fees by 20% to exclude poorer students. This helps to force more youth into the occupying army, the IDF where they can be sent off to die at their bosses bidding.

- We are opposed to compulsory military service in the IDF for Israeli youth and defend all those who, from internationalist motives, resist mobilisation against the Palestinian people. Likewise we support Israeli soldiers who either individually or, better still collectively, refuse to obey orders to repress their Palestinian brothers and sisters.
- Israeli-Jewish workers must form new trade unions, free from state interference.
- Against all privatisation and attacks on living standards in Israel. Free education for all.

The racial oppression of the Ethiopian Jews shows the racist character of Israel even to many of the Jews who live there. A mass anti-racist movement in Israel would help to mobilise some of the poorest Israelis in a struggle alongside the Palestinians. There must be no discrimination along religious, gender or ethnic lines in the workplace, trade unions must take up the question of discrimination and fight it as a class issue.

Workplace and factory committee should be forged in class struggle against the capitalists in Israel, democratic organisations which can take the form of strike committees or other organs of struggle. They are an invaluable tool in the fight against the bosses and for workers rights.

We fight for a new anti-Zionist, anti-imperialist workers party in Israel, there must be no support for the Zionist Israeli Labour party, a racist war mongering party of the Israeli capitalists.

The Arab regimes

The Arab leaders – the so-called “nationalist” or “progressive” one as well as the “pragmatic” and “conservative” ones, act objectively as the agents of imperialism in the region. They represent a major obstacle to the liberation of the Palestinian people, as well as their own citizens. The brutal repression of workers in these states, the absence of free trade unions or political parties not subordinated to the state makes this clear. The cause of human rights, of a decent life for workers and poor farmers in these countries is inextricably bound up with the Palestinian struggle and the struggle to drive the imperialist armies and oil companies out of the region.

The role of the Arab and “Islamic” regime – for which they are rewarded with aid, trade, and support for their continued rule – is to control and discipline their own peoples, while the foreign multinationals suck out their countries’ life blood, its natural wealth and resources. They offer the Palestinians their patronising official sympathy, charitable donations that are miserly in comparison to their obscene private wealth, without offering any meaningful support to their struggle.

When the border wall separating Egypt from the Gaza Strip was demolished in January 2008, the Egyptian authorities used water cannon and batons to force the Gazans’ back, after a few days delay to test the response of their own people. Indeed their hesitation was in part due to the demonstrations of sympathy that took place in cities and towns across Egypt. The fact that this sympathy exists across the entire region indicates a powerful resource for liberation if or rather when these regimes can be overthrown. The demonstrations which occurred in Egypt in support of the Palestinians provide an example that must be built on in the future.

What is clear is that none of the existing

Arab regimes can act as effective allies of the Palestinian people. As long as they are in power, they will help Israel to police the region. They must be overthrown and thus the genuine fighters for Palestinian freedom must link up with the fighters for democracy, freedom from imperialism, women’s rights, etc, in these countries. Together we can win – divided only further sufferings await us.

The Lebanese politicians of all sects refuse to allow the Palestinian refugees economic rights, or the rights of citizenship or permanent residence, forcing them to live segregated lives in refugee camps as second-class citizens. The Hashemite monarchy in Jordan is an open ally of the American project in the region, and gladly fought to expel the Palestinian fedayeen in 1970.

The Syrian regime – with its official pan-Arab ideology – has consistently tried to keep the Palestinian resistance under its control (most obviously in Lebanon), drowning it in blood when it has threatened to become an independent force. The Iranian regime claims to support the Palestinian resistance, yet it pursues an ambiguous policy of collaboration with the Americans and British over Iraq. Even Colonel Gaddafi has now been welcomed into the arms of the imperialists as a “reformed dictator”, ready to profit from lucrative trade deals with the USA and France.

Arab nationalism and the Arab peoples

One symptom of imperialism’s continued domination of the Middle East has been the preservation of the unviable state entities created by it during the colonial period. As the national and democratic tasks of the revolution necessarily have to take a state-national form, the question of state-national forms has been an important one for the left and anti-imperialists generally.

Gamal Abdul Nasser, the military officer who took power in Egypt and began the project of uniting the Arab people into a 'nation' came to epitomise the Arab nationalist project, his defeat in the six day war of 1967 paved the way for the decline and eventual disappearance of Arab nationalism. The decline of Arab nationalism as a mass force, and the degeneration of the regimes professing adherence to it, was marked by the Egyptian regime's abandonment of Nasser's social concessions to the masses, and his opposition to the Zionist state, as well as by the development of monstrous military dictatorships in Syria and Iraq, whose human rights records have often been worse than those of their conservative and openly pro-imperialist rivals.

Arab nationalism, in its Nasserist and Ba'athist variants, continues to exercise a defining influence on anti-imperialists and the left in the region. We differ from the approach of the pan-Arab tradition, not in our desire to erase the artificial boundaries erected by colonialism – where we are in complete agreement – but in our recognition that Arab nationalism, limits the unity necessary to drive imperialism out of the region. Why should the future state we are fighting for exclude peoples like the Iranians and even the Turks who have suffered from imperialist attacks and whose broad masses sympathise with the Palestinian struggle. Why should it exclude important national minorities like the Kurds or the Berbers of the Maghreb?

Similarly, if Arab nationalism seeks to include within its projected state forms Arab peoples that are not yet willing to be included, then it excludes from its struggle, artificially and unnecessarily, the national and democratic struggles of non-Arab peoples within its cultural and geographic sphere.

The Kurds, Armenians, Turkoimen, Assyrians, Berbers and others all have justified

national, cultural and linguistic grievances towards the existing Arab regimes. These grievances cannot be placated – or addressed – through a national programme that merely emphasises the common Arab language and culture of a majority of the oppressed classes in the region, and which seeks to absorb them, however benignly or benevolently, as minorities within this culture.

Their treatment at the hands of the Arab regimes, and the frequent indifference of parts of the Arab left to their struggle, has at times left them open to the self-interested and ultimately treacherous "assistance" of imperialism and its Israeli proxy. It is in the interest of the Arab peoples themselves to reach an accommodation with these nations, the better to form a common front against their real common enemy, imperialist capital.

Here, we must take our cue from Lenin's policy of the right of nations to self-determination. If the Arab peoples can be re-united only through common struggle and mutual consent, then this applies equally to the non-Arab peoples of the region. If they cannot be convinced, then the Arab left must be willing to defend their right to territorial separation or autonomy, against their own regimes if necessary.

The answer to the strongest unification of the Arab peoples and the other peoples of the region lies in the creation of a Socialist United States of the Middle East.

The crisis of leadership and the Islamist movements

The crisis of leadership that has paralysed the Stalinist and nationalist-influenced Arab left extends also to even the most radical of the Islamist resistance movements, Hamas. Islamist social and cultural rhetoric coupled with a petty bourgeois strategy of the bullet and the ballot box (a guerrilla struggle combined with electoral campaigning) have not succeeded in defeating Israel. They have

only further divided the Palestinians.

Hamas' own policy in the aftermath of the division of the Palestinian territories between itself and Fatah demonstrates its own lack of confidence in its chosen programme and methods of struggle, and their limitations. It calls merely for the resumption of a "national unity" government with Fatah, whose only purpose can be to resume the negotiations with Israel that Fatah is currently pursuing alone. While Hamas' terms for negotiation would no doubt be more robust than Fatah's, it is in the nature of guerrilla struggle – the armed struggle of a minority standing separate from the social power and mass struggles of the social classes – that it can reach its objectives only through negotiation and compromise, after a heroic period of bloody self-sacrifice.

The preferred tactic of suicide bombings cannot lead to victory. The sacrifice of their lives by dedicated fighters, often to kill harmless civilians, is a dead end. Of course the sufferings of Palestinian civilians are greater and more numerous and thus drive brave and self-sacrificing people, martyrs, to actions they see as striking back. We can say is that these actions are not effective, and that a better way needs to be sought. Revolutionaries argue against such tactics and instead call for mass action, and for it to be armed wherever necessary and effective.

- For a Third, mass Intifada, form popular committees across the Gaza Strip and the West Bank that unite all forces willing to struggle against Zionism.
- The workers organisations and the socialist parties must create their own organs of defence to defend their members, organisation, resources and public activity from external threats – whether from the Zionist state, or from internal repression by the national and religious parties. Such organs can form the nucleus for a future mass workers militia.

As the revolutionaries are only a small section of the class at any time, outside of a revolutionary situation, the correct use of united front tactics is a crucial stage towards becoming a mass force. The united front allows the revolutionary working class to unite with the non-revolutionary forces and provides a space to win new forces to the ideas of communism. Therefore freedom of political criticism is of paramount importance, and no force should have the right to silence the voice of the communist movement as the price of an alliance with it.

The working class and rural poor across the region have to assimilate the lessons of the failure of Stalinism and Arab nationalism. Cross-class political alliances are unstable at best, reactionary at worst. They tie the working class and poor to the political programmes of the middle strata or to bourgeois forces. Socialists fight for the complete independence of the working class to pursue its own demands and policies at any time in the struggle.

- For trade unions and workers organisations independent of the national and religious parties. Palestinian trade unions must organise workers across religious or political divides.

We should organise against any attempt to subordinate the working class to their oppressors or to non-proletarian ideologies. However, in the united front, we support joint action with all forces fighting imperialism and capitalism wherever possible to maximise its chance of success of the struggle, irrespective of the ideology of those forces. This goes from strikes, military action up to the insurrection itself.

Women's liberation

Women are not simply prominent amongst the victims of Zionist aggression; they have played a major role in all the Palestinian struggles of resistance, in the

guerrilla struggles and above all in the mass mobilisations, especially in the First Intifada and in the recent mobilisations in Gaza. Women have been more integrated in political, social and educational life than in many Arab states. Thus the attempt by political Islamists to separate men and women in these spheres, to narrow their access to education, jobs, and political leadership roles is quite literally reactionary in the worst sense and must be resisted. But even in largely secular circles patriarchal customs persist, i.e. the ruling position of the father and husband over wives, mothers and daughters. Even the most liberal capitalist state systematically unloads the main responsibility for childcare, cooking and cleaning onto women restricted for a large part of their lives to the family home. Only the socialisation of all these tasks, freeing women for full and equal participation in public life with men can finally complete the liberation of women. This can only be achieved in a socialist society but we can and must fight our way towards this goal via a series of important struggles starting in the here and now.

This means an organised struggle by women and men alike for women's rights at all levels: legal and civic rights, jobs and social welfare, childcare and domestic labour, control over their own bodies. For these reasons we fight for:

- Equal marriage rights, to the right to divorce and to a subsequent role in the care of and access of children. Unmarried women, including unmarried mothers, to have equal rights and face no discrimination
- The right to wear whatever clothes a woman chooses and the strict illegalisation and punishment of all coercion in this matter.
- The right of women to work in all occupations to all levels at an equal wage or

salary to the men in the profession.

- The provision of free high quality child-care at work and in the community with nurseries and clinics, controlled by the women who use them and the women and men who work in them.
- The right to equal access to an education of equal quality to that of men: with a secular curriculum and no separation of the sexes, except where this is genuinely voluntary on both sides.
- For the strict punishment of rape, sexual harassment, and violence against women, including within the family: for a network of women's refuges.
- For women's control of their own bodies: for modern scientific sexual education in schools, for free contraception on demand from puberty onwards. For a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy.

A mass movement of women for their rights, rooted in the working class, the refugees and poor peasant women, needs to be built. It should not exclude either secular or Islamic feminists who agree with the struggle for equal legal, social and economic rights for all, nor believers or non-believers, Muslims, Christians, Jews, agnostics, atheists, etc. Such a movement must be anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist, rejecting all attempts to use women's rights to win support for these arch-reactionary forces.

Our revolutionary goals

The Israeli state can only be truly defeated and open up the possibility of a socialist state if it is smashed by a revolutionary struggle against the Zionist ruling class, led by Palestinians and other progressive forces who must plan and prepare for this final confrontation, learning 'the art of insurrection'. Only a revolutionary party can prepare the vanguard workers for this task, which is why one must be built. The revolutionary party would be open to all vanguard fighters

who support this programme, it must reach out across borders and draw in sizeable forces of workers, women, youth and intellectuals. The party would seek to win progressive Israeli workers and youth into its ranks. Therefore the party must organise illegally where necessary, and also be a disciplined cadre party, operating under democratic centralism in order to ensure its effectiveness and ability to survive repression.

It will set itself the goal of fighting for the overthrow of the Israeli government and the replacement of the corrupt Palestine National Authority with a constituent assembly, tasked with drawing up the constitution of a bi-national, secular and democratic state. At the peak of this revolutionary struggle when the question of socialism or barbarism is concretely posed, we put forward the demand for a workers and peasants government to take power into the hands of councils of delegates (soviets), arming the working people and smashing the bourgeois state in the process.

As revolutionaries we raise the following slogans as the general political guide of our principles, to be fought for internationally by the working class.

- Down with the imperialist powers - exploiters and oppressors of the peoples of the Middle East!
- Smash the Zionist state -an instrument of imperialism!
- Victory to the national liberation of the Palestinian people!
- Critical support to even bourgeois Arab states in economic or military conflict with imperialism and Israel
- Unconditional but critical support by the proletariats of the imperialist countries to the military struggle of the Palestinians against the Israelis or Arab collaborators
- For permanent revolution in Palestine and the Middle East

- For a socialist Palestine in a United Socialist States of the Middle East
- For the Fifth International – a revolutionary weapon in the hands of all oppressed people and workers to fight for their liberation!

Two states, one grand illusion

The Workers' Liberty group is notorious on the British left for its support for Zionism. It seeks to marry the right of the Palestinians to their own state with the right of Israel to exist within "secure borders".

Like most of the Zionist left in Israel they start not from the Palestinians' need for peace with justice but from Israel's need to have peace with security. Their latest pamphlet thus argues for a "two states" solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.¹

It says this is the "only solution that takes account of the rights of both sides in the conflict, and therefore it is the only rational, just and progressive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict."

The authors support "an independent Palestinian state side-by-side with Israel", and emphatically defend the right of Israel to exist in areas where the Israeli Jews are a majority.

There is an immediate problem with this argument. The Israelis created a majority Jewish population in Palestine by forcibly expelling Palestinian Arabs in 1947-49 and denying them and their families the right to return to the territory of their origin.

At the same time, under the Law of Return, Jewish people of any nationality are entitled to Israeli citizenship upon arrival in Israel, even if they have never been there before.

This racist citizenship law is fundamental to the maintenance of a Jewish majority

population in Palestine. If the Palestinians were allowed to return, then under any democratic system they would understandably and justifiably vote against being consigned to the status of second-class citizens and therefore against the state defining itself as specifically Jewish.

This historical reality has to be the starting point for any socialist response to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Israel's mistreatment of the Palestinians is not simply the product of a bad policy pursued by reactionary right-wing governments. It arose directly as a result of the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

The only way Israel could create a Jewish majority population on its territory was to drive out millions of Palestinian people, prevent them from returning, strip them of land ownership, and wage a series of bloody wars against any Palestinians that resisted.

It is the continuation of this policy that leads to the forcible settlement of Palestinian land on the West Bank today, complete with bulldozings of Palestinian homes, discrimination in access to water supplies and a regime of permanent military repression.

This is not some bloody aberration but the logical and necessary extension of the principles that underlay the foundation of the Israeli state.

The only just solution must encompass equal citizenship rights for Jews and Arabs and the right of the Palestinian refugees to

return to their land of origin. This means a state in which Jews and Arabs are equal, not a state that defines itself specifically as "Jewish" or "Arab".

The continued existence of an Israeli-wish state, even alongside a Palestinian state, would depend on the maintenance of racist citizenship laws and the exclusion of millions of Palestinians from the territory. Far from providing the basis for a lasting peace, this could only condemn the region to further cycles of repression and war.

As if to prove the point, the Workers' Liberty pamphlet quickly finds that support for a Jewish state in Palestine requires it to defend Israel's racist citizenship policy. The author of most of the articles in the pamphlet, Sean Matgamna, accepts that the return of the Palestinians would challenge the foundations of Israel's Jewish identity - so he rejects the right of return. In the pamphlet's introduction, written on 19 October this year, he describes the demand for the Palestinians' right to return to Israel as "collective resettlement in the territory now occupied by the Israeli Jews, most of whom were born there".

In a subsequent article, "The Origins of the Conflict" he explicitly rejects the Palestinians' right to return: "The 'right to return' in its straightforward sense is the demand that the events of the 20th century in Palestine be undone, that the film of history be rolled backwards. It is inconceivable that the Israelis will voluntarily agree to this. The demand that it should is at best the demand that the Jewish state should cease to conceive of itself as a Jewish state - not just get out of the West Bank and Gaza, and cease discriminatory or chauvinist practices, but cease to be the state of the distinct Israeli-Jewish nation. It is no more realistic than the call that the British, French, German or Irish states should cease to be British, French, German or

Irish, a call quite distinct from the justified one that they should let in far more refugees and migrants. The 'right of return' therefore, in practice, comes down to the 'demand' for the conquest and destruction of Israel."

This is an extraordinary passage to have been written by anyone claiming to be a democrat, let alone a socialist.

In the first place, Matgamna admits here that the democratic right of the Palestinians to return to the territory they lived in fifty years ago stands in contradiction to the existence of a Jewish state in Palestine. How then can he expect a lasting peace on this basis? How can there be a "rational, just and progressive" solution or a lasting peace if millions of Palestinians are excluded? This argument merely proves that the whole idea of a two-state "solution" is utopian and reactionary.

Also clear from this passage is that Workers' Liberty actually prefer the rights of one group over the other - the "right" of the Israeli-Jewish people to preserve a majority secured through war, land seizures and racist laws takes precedence over the right of over three million refugees living in squalor in Lebanon, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza to return.

The reason given for this is that every nation, like France, Germany, Ireland etc, has the right to national self-determination and that this must encompass the right to a state of its own. The pamphlet says that to refuse this right to the Israeli Jews is to single them out as having lesser rights than other nations. It says, "the hidden assumption is that the Israeli Jewish nation is an illegitimate nation, and therefore does not have the same rights as other nations."

This is a dangerous and dishonest argument. Of course there are no "illegitimate nations" - the very idea could only be raised by a national chauvinist or racist. But there

is a difference between a nation and a nation-state, and the state of Israel was created in very specific circumstances - the driving out of millions of Palestinians and the conquest of their land. Revolutionary socialists are not proposing to invert that crime and drive out the Israeli Jews, just to allow the Palestinians to return.

Instead of starting from this legitimate democratic national right of the Palestinian people, Workers' Liberty starts from the idea that the right to a nation-state is an abstract good, one to be supported in all situations. By contrast, revolutionary socialists support the right of self-determination only where it is not exercised at the expense of the rights of another nation.

The "right" of white South Africans to a state did not take precedence over the right of the majority black population to vote. Why should the right of the Israeli Jews to a state take precedence over the rights of millions of Palestinians?

Even the example about Britain, France, Germany or Ireland used by Matgamma backfires. France is not Israel. But if "France" had been created 50 years ago by the dispossession and driving out of millions of its original inhabitants who were of a different nationality, if those original inhabitants still lived just beyond its borders in refugee camps, if those people were in permanent rebellion and insurrection demanding their rights, then socialists in "France" and elsewhere would certainly advocate their right to return.

And if some of the "French" settler majority complained that this would violate their "right" to a nation-state, revolutionaries would expose this argument as a justification for racism and colonial conquest, not as some expression of "French" democracy.

Just how far Workers Liberty is prepared to pursue this argument is revealed in a

breath-taking passage in an article entitled, without apparent irony, "Unravelling the Issues". Here the demand for the right to return of the Palestinians is presented to the pamphlets mainly British readers in the following terms:

"...the real equivalent would be if many tens of millions of people, almost as many as the population of Britain, just across the Channel, were claiming a collective right to 'repossess' Britain."

This example is obviously supposed to frighten us out of supporting the Palestinians' rights by placing the reader in the position of Israelis who view the Palestinians with hatred and fear? It tries to appeal to the reader's sense of national insecurity - a despicable thing for any socialist writer to do. Above all, it shows how shallow the writer's sense of internationalism really is. For what if it were a valid comparison?

If Britain had forcibly expelled and dispossessed "tens of millions" fifty years ago, and they were living in refugee camps just across the channel, then revolutionary socialists emphatically would support their right to return, and if that meant this island could no longer describe itself as a "British" state, we wouldn't care.

Genuine internationalism means supporting an end to all oppression on the grounds of nationality, not declaring that recent national and colonial conquests should be treated as final accomplished historical facts just so the victors can maintain their supremacist nation-states.

Workers Liberty's "killer argument" in support of the two states solution is that the largest Palestinian organisation, the PLO, also supports it. This is true - but it is a result of the PLO leadership's fatal policy of compromise with Israel and their abandonment of the historic rights of their own people.

The PLO under Yasser Arafat has persistently accommodated to Israel, handing over the names and addresses of Palestinian radicals to the Israelis even during their campaign of assignations, allowing the Israelis to wriggle out of every one of their obligations under successive peace treaties, demanding an end to Palestinian resistance in favour of continued talks that yield nothing and utilising their position within the Palestine National Authority to demobilise mass resistance while the leaders enrich themselves and persecute their opponents.

A Palestinian state existing alongside Israel would be like the PNA today - a powerless Bantustan, leaving all the real control and might in the hands of Israel. That is why the task of revolutionary socialists is not to devise ever more "Marxist" excuses for Israeli domination of the region, but to fight for a genuine, lasting solution.

This is not, despite Workers Liberty's insinuations, a policy of "driving the Jews into the sea", but a socialist republic with no single religious or national allegiance, one in which Arabs and Jews live together as equal citizens. The only force that can bring it into being is the working class, peasantry and urban poor of the Middle East.

The longer the Palestinian left equivocates on this issue, the more likely it will be that the PLO's failings will drive the heroic youth of the Intifada into the arms of the Islamists like Hamas, who do indeed propose the reactionary solution of driving out the Jews.

As Karl Marx said, a nation which oppresses another can never itself be free. For as long as there is a racist and discriminatory Jewish state in the Middle East, the consequences will be disastrous for the Palestinians and the Jews alike.

¹ Two Nations, Two States - Socialists and

What we stand for

Capitalism

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit rather than human need. It is the root cause of poverty, insecurity, unemployment, all forms of social oppression, and the destruction of the environment. It cannot be reformed out of existence piecemeal. Its ruling class, the bourgeoisie, must be overthrown forcibly and expropriated so that all the large scale means of production become the property of society.

Capitalism creates its own gravedigger, the modern proletariat. The working class both manual and white collar workers, workers in production, commerce, administration and social services makes up the majority of the population in all the developed capitalist countries and is a growing force in the Third World.

The working class, because of its concentration at the heart of capitalist profit making and its systematic exploitation in this process is the only class with both the historic interest and the objective power to bring it to an end and replace it with a higher form of social organisation which abolishes exploitation and social oppression completely.

Social Revolution

The replacement by of capitalist production for profit by socialist production, planned to satisfy human need can be accomplished only by a socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state in every country. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

There is no peaceful, reformist, democratic or parliamentary road to socialism not because of the bloodthirstiness of revolutionary communists but because the bourgeoisie will never give up its power and possessions as a result of an election.

The Reformist Workers' Parties

The Communist, Socialist, Social Democratic and Labour parties are not parties of the working class serving its historic and immediate interests. Where they are parties with historic and organic roots in the organised working class but are bourgeois in their politics and practice, we consider them - as Lenin and Trotsky did as bourgeois workers' parties. They represent an historic organisational break from the bourgeois parties - a formal step towards class independence.

Where they are allied or affiliated to the trade unions or provide the bulk of the leadership of the trade unions, acting together as "twin pillars" of a national labour move-

ment they are agents of capital within the workers' movement. They represent a massive obstacle to the winning of the working class to a mass revolutionary party.

Revolutionaries cannot overcome this obstacle simply by propagandistic exposure but must also utilise various forms of the united front, depending on the circumstances and their own strength. Included in these united front tactics can be critical electoral support, entry as a revolutionary opposition into the reformist parties and their auxiliary organisations (youth leagues etc.)

Wherever a substantial section of the proletarian vanguard are to be found in reformist parties, struggling against the reformist leaders, revolutionaries must join that fight whilst seeking to building a revolutionary faction to win workers away from reformism-left as well as right and to the construction of a revolutionary party.

The Trade Unions

These basic organs of economic self-defence of the working class are almost everywhere dominated by a privileged bureaucracy - the "labour lieutenants of capital". These unions can only be transformed by a rank and file movement which ousts the reformist bureaucrats, democratises the unions and wins them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class-factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations. If the reformist bureaucrats expel masses of militant workers from the unions or if they neglect the great mass of the most exploited and oppressed proletarians in favour of an aristocracy of skilled workers then a revolutionary party will not flinch from organising new, militant, democratic trade unions, pledged from the outset to the struggle for socialism.

The Russian Revolution

The Russian revolution of October 1917 was not only the first successful workers' revolution but the only one so far that succeeded in establishing a workers' state based on workers' councils (soviets). It remains the fully valid model for the revolutions of the twenty first century. Its key lessons - the need for soviets, for a revolutionary vanguard party, for a workers' militia, for an armed insurrection have become a permanent and irreplaceable part of working class strategy.

However, isolated internationally, in large measure due to the counterrevolutionary actions of Social Democracy in strangling the European workers revolution, the young Russian workers state underwent a bureaucratic degen-

eration and then a political counterrevolution.

This was led by Joseph Stalin who represented a parasitic caste which took power, destroyed the old leaders and cadres of Bolshevism and crushed the last remnants of workers' democracy. At the same time this caste was not able, in the 1920s, to overthrow the economic gains of the October revolution. Rather it distorted them in the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country".

In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established by bureaucratic decree, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. By the 1970s the parasitic bureaucratic caste had led these states to stagnation, crises and in the 1990s to destruction. The remains of the bureaucratic caste in China is still a Stalinist party, but it has restored capitalism in the country. Trotsky's prediction that either the working class would destroy the bureaucracy or the bureaucracy would destroy the remnants of the socialised property relations was born out. The working class, politically atomised after decades of Stalinist rule watched as capitalism was reintroduced to Russia and Eastern Europe.

Political revolution

As long as the gains of the working class remain in existence Trotsky's programme of political revolution remains valid. Indeed only political revolution can save the state owned industries, planning and the monopoly of foreign trade from destruction. In Cuba and North Korea we are for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through proletarian political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy.

We opposed the restoration of capitalism. In times of war we unconditionally defend all workers' states against imperialism. In a series of states in Eastern and Central Europe and the ex-USSR pro-bourgeois governments came to power in 1989-91 and set about restoring capitalism. Only Cuba and North Korea remain as degenerated workers states, surrounded by hostile Imperialists.

Stalinism

Stalinism has consistently betrayed the working class from the 1920s to the 1990s. The Stalinist Communist Parties' strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution which obstructs the working class from fighting for power have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. In China (1927) in Spain (1939) it helped brutal military dictatorships and fascist forces triumph. After the war in Indonesia (1966) and in Chile (1973) it did the same again. Only the destruction of Stalinism will prevent this

record of betrayals being repeated.

Social Oppression

Oppression because of gender, sexual preference, colour, nationality or age is an integral feature of capitalism systematically oppressing people on the basis of race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

Imperialism

Imperialism is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support nationalists in these countries fighting to drive imperialist troops out of their countries.

But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois leaderships, we fight for permanent revolution – working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism and internationalism. In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are always and everywhere for the defeat of the imperialist army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

The League for the Fifth International

The LFI is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme – From Protest to Power - and our day to day policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the revolutionary documents of the first four congresses of the Third International and the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

The League for the Fifth International does not claim to be a revolutionary International: rather it is an international revolutionary tendency of groups fighting to build one. The last revolutionary International (the Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51. The LFI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to help build a Fifth International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. If you are a class-conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist - join us!

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